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ABSTRACT

The articles in this journal issue examine the characteristics of student writing apprehension, and teaching methods to alleviate it. The titles of the articles and their authors are as follows: (1) "Writing Anxiety: Reasons and Reduction Techniques" (Helen R. Heaton and Pauline M. Pray); (2) "Writing Anxiety and the Gifted Student Writer" (De Gutschow); (3) "Are Basic Writers Afraid to Write?" (Donna Gorrell); (4) "Encouraging Junior High Writers" (Monica L. Josten); (5) "Making a Writing Class a Community" (Robert C. Rosen); and (6) "Readers' Perceptions of Advanced College Writing and Adult College Graduate Writing" (Susan P. Miller and Charles F. Meyer). Reviews of selected books for children, adolescents, and teachers are included. (HTH)

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"WRITING ANXIETY"

For English Teachers At All Levels
April, 1982 Volume 24, No.3

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WRITING ANXIETY: REASONS AND REDUCTION TECHNIQUES

HELEN R. HEATON
University of Wisconsin — Stevens Point

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Stevens Point Area Senior High School

Anyone who has ever sat down to compose anything knows about writing anxiety. When a group of English teachers at the NCTE Convention in Boston was asked to give reasons "Why I Can't Write Today," a la Bill Bernardi's poem (Bernhart, 1977), they gleefully jotted a variety of original excuses which would have been the envy of their students. They couldn't write that day because

...there aren't any unicorns in Boston.
...the only pen I have is my doodling pen--it would rather draw pictures.
...my hand fell asleep last hour.
...the waistband on my skirt is so tight from eating too much that is ALL I can think about!
...I'm not in school.

While the symptoms are all too familiar, teachers need to be aware of the causes and predictable effects of writing anxiety in order to develop curricula and methods to modify it. Research in a rural central Wisconsin high school of 320 students revealed some causes and effects of the problem, and writing programs developed in a nearby city high school of 1,940 students suggest some possible solutions.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING

The research examined the level and distribution of writing anxiety, the reasons students gave for their attitudes toward writing, and differences in background between students with little apprehension and those with high anxiety levels. All students took a Writing Apprehension Test (WAT) developed by Daly and Miller (1975) then wrote a ten-minute Writing Autobiography explaining how they felt about writing and what past experiences had contributed to these attitudes. Finally, case history information from six high and five low anxiety twelfth graders was collected to compare the past writing experiences of these two groups.

The level of writing anxiety for this high school population was 79.66 (WAT score mean) or 5.25 higher than the average mean score of a group of college undergraduates studied by Daly (1975). Gutschow's study (1981) of gifted ninth graders reports a WAT score mean of only 53.9 which is 25.76 below the apprehension level of the students in this study. The varying results of these studies make clear the advisability of determining the level of anxiety in any group studied since each school and even each class is unique, just as each student is. Nineteen percent of the students in the school studied showed high anxiety, not an extremely high number compared to populations studied by others. Considering, however, that these 61 high anxiety students constituted the equivalent of two English classes of 30 each, nearly one-fifth of the student body, the number was sufficient to make reduction of writing anxiety highly desirable in a writing program.

The writing autobiographies made clear, not surprisingly, that highly anxious (HA) students wrote significantly fewer words than those with low anxiety (LA). HA students averaged 74 words in the ten minute writing autobiography; LA students averaged 144 words. Most HA writers apparently avoid writing, and when writing is unavoidable, as in a school assignment, they write as briefly as they dare. Like people invited to a party given by their betters which they are forced to attend, they arrive late, say as little as possible, and leave early (Graves, 1978).

A great many words do not guarantee good writing but neither do very few words. If highly apprehensive students consistently write fewer words than those with low apprehension, the possibilities for high anxiety students to practice and improve their writing are severely limited. Apprehension may be partly a cause and partly an effect of poor writing, but the cycle of apprehension is not likely to be broken until apprehensive writers are identified and given the writing practice needed to improve their writing. Whether anxiety precedes or follows poor writing is as debatable as whether chickens come before eggs, but the relation between writing practice and improvement is obvious.

The writing autobiographies also provided an efficient means for collecting specific information from a large number of students about the causes of their writing attitudes. Writing assignments were listed most frequently by students, regardless of anxiety level, as having influenced their attitudes toward writing, and 217 of the 223 comments made were negative. Ninety-six students said they were forced to write when they had too little stimulus or time to think, write, and revise. As one boy said in his autobiography,

I don't like writing for one or many reasons cause I write sloppy when I rush too much and my hands get tired. Then I can't think right. Plus that I don't EVER have time to do it at home, and I don't like the way some teachers treat you when you're doing it. They push you too much.

Even low anxiety writers felt the need for more time, but the fewer words written by high anxiety writers in their writing autobiographies compared to the number written by LA writers indicated that time limits were particularly detrimental to apprehensive writers.

The students in this study ranked presence or absence of writing skills second after assignments as affecting their attitudes toward writing. These skills, divided into four groups, include: most important to students is the amount of writing practice and instruction received. Second in importance is the thinking of ideas, clarity and organization. The third group consists of the mechanical skills such as penmanship, spelling, grammar, punctuation and vocabulary. The fourth group, ability deficit, received no student comments.

Forty-nine students mentioned the amount of writing practice and instruction as significantly affecting their attitudes, more comments than in any other one subcategory. Twenty-three comments were positive, but 29, over half, were negative, indicating insufficient practice and instruction. One girl wrote, "In our grade school we never had the opportunity to learn how to write 'decent.' We didn't have much practice at writing at all. And now in high school we have to do alot (sic) of writing."

Judging from these students' responses there is no doubt about what kind of practice and instruction they need. Seventy-nine of 91 comments were negative regarding students' satisfaction with the composition skills of thinking of ideas, expressing themselves clearly and

organizing their writing. Nine of the 12 positive comments expressing confidence in these skills were predictably made by LA writers.

Eighty-one comments were made about mechanical skills (penmanship, spelling, vocabulary, grammar, punctuation), and 66 were negative. It is worth noting, however, that even though comments about handwriting were unsolicited, 31 (26 from boys) of the 66 negative comments indicated poor penmanship as a cause of anxiety about writing ability. Ten students (nine girls, one boy) said good penmanship made them feel good about writing. Interviews with the parents of case history students also made clear that these adults often equated good writing with good penmanship. Writing teachers may be aware that neat handwriting has little to do with the quality of a written composition, but a good many students and their parents make little distinction between appearance and content. Teachers may also question the practice of drilling students in mechanical skills such as spelling and punctuation separate from the total composing process since student comments regarding the need for organization, clarity, practice and instruction far outweigh those indicating ignorance of grammar or punctuation as a source of writing apprehension.

Teacher response to writing, either grades or comments, ranked third among students as influencing their attitudes. Low anxiety students made 20 positive comments out of 27, making clear that teacher encouragement and approval resulted in confidence and pleasure in writing. A twelfth grade LA girl wrote, "I was expecting a B or C ... and I got an A. Ever since I've felt confidence." High anxiety students made more negative comments about teacher response than about any other item except the time allowed for writing.

Interviews with the case history students made even clearer the relation between anxiety level and positive or negative teacher comments. Low anxiety students recalled receiving recognition and praise from teachers beginning in the elementary school which gave them confidence. High anxiety students were convinced they could not write well and were reluctant to try from fear of low grades. As one twelfth grade boy summed it up,

English class is a good class, but when you are never complimented on your work and always put down on what you do, which happens alot (sic), you start to feel that you are no good and neither is your work. So my attitude toward writing is poor....

Obviously, high grades should not be given to poor writing, but teachers can explain to students and parents that a letter grade need not be given to every piece of writing done. Students need to write more than one teacher can comment on and grade, and they need opportunities to experiment and revise without the fear of failure. After they have had the time to practice and the instruction necessary to produce the best writing they can, then most young writers welcome criticism and evaluation. Students usually realize that their writing needs improvement, but they must have some confidence in their ability to improve before they will try it.

The importance of constructive teacher comments as one means to reduce writing anxiety was apparent in both case history interviews and writing autobiographies. Unfortunately, students with high writing anxiety avoid not only writing, but also asking for necessary help and encouragement (Seiler et al., 1979). If these students are to receive the help they need, teachers will have to identify anxious writers as early as possible. One major purpose of this study was to test methods

for discovering students' attitudes toward writing as well as to collect information useful to classroom teachers. The WAT test measures the level of anxiety while the Writing Autobiography reveals some of its sources. The results from analyzing WAT scores and examining the writing autobiographies of the students in one school suggest some methods of teaching writing which may reduce the "fear and resentment" (Braddock, 1963) some students feel toward writing.

ANXIETY REDUCTION TECHNIQUES

This research provides insight into the interaction between student attitudes and teaching techniques and focuses attention on methods to make students more at ease with writing and, thus, more competent. Although these methods may not be designed specifically to reduce writing anxiety, an awareness of this relation allows teachers to make conscious use of existing methods for that purpose. The primary purpose of a writing class is not just to reduce anxiety but to reduce it in order to help students become better writers. The following techniques can contribute to accomplishing both.

Three writing courses and two school-wide programs to provide writing assistance across the curriculum employ techniques to alleviate the writing anxiety of students at the Stevens Point Area Senior High School. During their junior year, students elect one of a pair of writing courses which fit the needs of students with different levels of writing anxiety. Since students choose which course they will take, they are making the choice of which techniques best suit them.

Writing Unlimited provides extensive prewriting activities in which the generation of ideas and creation of voluminous material allow students to select their best starters to be revised to "masterpiece" standing. Contract based units in the *Writers Workshop I* class allow students to set challenging and realistic goals. Tutorial conferences assure students of individual response to their writing efforts as they revise to reach their contract level. Seniors who elect a semester of *Writers Workshop II* spend the introductory weeks setting individual writing objectives under the guidance of the instructor. Sharpening strengths and shoring up weaknesses they have identified in their writing increases student interest in and commitment to the writing process.

The Write Place, a fully staffed writing lab open throughout the school day, gives long range encouragement and enrichment to student writers as well as immediate assistance with writing problems. Assignments from any curricular area meet the "We give help, not grades" motto of tutors who use "conferences and kindness" to work with students of all anxiety levels, helping them become more relaxed and confident in their communication. The Write Place staff provides a pragmatic source of individual assistance to other English teachers and reaches out to colleagues in other disciplines, offering lab aid to students as they write in classes as varied as agriculture, chemistry, psychology and distributive education.

Students entering Stevens Point Area Senior High School receive their own copies of a writing handbook entitled WRITE RIGHT for use throughout their high school program (Bonikowske, et al., 1979). Written by four English teachers at the school, it contains guidelines for writing, research, and the study of literature as well as special sections developed for and with the I.M.C., social studies, science, math and business departments. The 102 page handbook provides a quick reference in portable form to answer common writing problems; students are expected to

have it at hand in any course which requires writing and are encouraged to use blank pages at the back for notes and reminders that will help them feel better prepared to write.

Time to create writing and time to improve it before it is evaluated were primary student concerns revealed in research. The key response that teachers can make to this is inherent in the revision process itself. Providing not merely opportunity to revise but a positive mandate to do so is the teacher's trump card. When students expect to engage in revision they quickly realize that the clean sheets of paper before them are not stone tablets. Revision to contract level in *Writers Workshop I* and selection of work for improvement from extensive prewriting in *Writing Unlimited* insure that students will not face the pressures of immediate evaluation.

During the class time alloted for the revision process teachers and students are able to conference about successive drafts of papers in progress. Students are told that each paper submitted should represent their best possible work at that time, but that they will undoubtedly be able to refer to earlier work as they discuss changes made or needed. An interim grade may be given so students will know how the teacher feels the work is progressing.

The tutorial conference itself can produce anxiety, as any writer knows who has had to meet with an instructor to "talk about the paper." While experience is the most effective antidote to conferencing nerves, a simple process can deal with one major concern. Often students' worries over how their papers are going to be received are needlessly magnified by fretting over how they will remember all that is said in the conference long enough to make the suggested revisions. In both *Writers Workshop I and II* each student is assigned an audio cassette tape which is used to record tutorial conferences, reducing pressure to remember what was said and allowing a freer flow of dialog between writer and reactor. Replayed at leisure at home or with a tape player and headset in the classroom these taped sessions become part of the revision process. When students have submitted second drafts, teacher taped remarks can provide personal reaction while speeding the return of papers that need more revision. The teacher has the option of a personal conference or taped remarks depending on the needs of the student and the time available.

In addition to their concerns with time, the surveyed students showed considerable awareness of their need for composition skills. The organization and clarity of a piece of writing depends on the quality of the thought process behind it. That thinking and writing are hard work and difficult to do well are truths that teachers and students recognize; the proposition that writing teaches thinking is a more difficult idea yet one that also must be acknowledged. Extensive prewriting and ample time for revision tell students more effectively than any lecture that the teacher is aware of the interaction of thought and writing, and the act of writing helps the writer discover what he or she has to say. Students should be encouraged to "talk through" difficult ideas in conferences with the teacher or during peer tutoring. The audio tape assigned to each student is another way to capture orally those elusive thoughts that help spark good writing.

To encourage students to take active control of the structure and content of their writing, a four question approach to the tutorial conference puts responsibility on writers to seek reaction to their work. In *Writers Workshop II* writers bring to their conferences questions about

what the reader liked in the writing, what questions the reader needed to have answered in order to understand the author's intent, how the writer might structure the paper to answer these questions, and what the author needs to do to make the paper ready for publication. Students are actively engaged in the search for ways to improve their writing and not just passive receptors of the tutor's insights.

Research has indicated the vital need for practice as well as instruction in development of writing facility; awareness of this need and attempts to satisfy it have emerged over a period of years at Stevens Point. As a first step a year-long literature and writing course was divided to provide one semester specifically dealing with writing while the other semester continued to incorporate practice in writing related to literature. This took place during the four years of planning which preceded the opening of The Write Place. As the idea for it developed, the writing lab grew beyond a facility for the English department to support efforts to improve student writing throughout the school. Faculty members in other disciplines can now receive assistance from The Write Place in developing writing assignments that draw on skills learned in English classes and put them to use in content areas. Lab staff are available to go into other courses to present the writing aspects of these assignments while the regular teacher explains the subject area requirements. The Write Place staff also aids in the creation of evaluation techniques which allow teachers to focus on content without neglecting structure and mechanics. As the assignment is carried out, The Write Place provides the actual tutoring of students. Making it easier for teachers in all areas to have students write frequently reduces writing anxiety by providing needed practice.

Writing instruction cannot focus exclusively or even primarily on skills of mechanics, spelling, vocabulary and grammar as a method of reducing writing anxiety. In fact, with students of low or moderate ability, excessive insistence on immediate mechanical correctness can inhibit lively writing. A balanced approach which emphasizes improvements in these areas in each successive draft and requires correctness of expression in final "masterpieces" sets more realistic expectations. In *Writing Unlimited* checklists of positive statements attached to returned drafts allow teacher praise of effectively handled mechanics and structure. Use of The Write Place as a resource for students needing help with these areas allows students to "clean up" their work in a neutral setting before it reaches the teacher. Teachers in speech and literature courses as well as teachers in other subject areas regularly use the writing lab in this way.

"My son can't write, his penmanship is awful," is a comment all too often heard at parent conference time. The need to teach the physical mechanics of handwriting in the early grades can easily result in equating legibility with content. A quick survey of the calligraphy produced by rich and famous writers, or even by the typical English faculty, will disabuse all but the most naive of this notion. Given the variation in fine motor coordination ability, it is as unlikely that the writing teacher will be able to elicit perfect Palmer Method from every struggling student as it is that the best coaches will be able to turn out an entire team of Bob Laniers or the finest choreographers produce a troupe of Rudolph Nureyevs. By the time students reach high school, teachers at Stevens Point acknowledge that only those with exceptional self-motivation will greatly improve their handwriting. They respond by insisting that papers be legible, even if that means printing or typing. Students with poor handwriting may use adult handwriting improvement materials in The Write Place, and it is strongly suggested that they master at least

enough skill at typing for their personal use as soon as possible. The typewriter in The Write Place and the machines in the Office Practice Lab are often used by students who welcome this option.

English teachers at Stevens Point Area Senior High School put grades on student papers, although not necessarily on every one, and they write comments on them, though the quantity as well as the tenor of their remarks will vary. Discussions on appropriate grading and commenting are more likely to generate heat than light. One technique which has served to reinforce the philosophy of the revision process has been the use of the "R" grade. When asked by students what the "R" on top of a returned paper means, teachers respond, "Revise, rethink, rewrite, return; what else?" though they may, like one audience member at the NCTE Convention, be thinking "Ridiculous!"

The "R" grade's biggest value is that it provides students with time to improve. It is given with firm time limits, usually 24 hours, and the revision must be made to earn credit for the assignment. Teachers in other departments who use the "R" grade are encouraged to send paper and student to The Write Place for assistance with the revision. It is unusual that a teacher is unable to wait a day for a readable paper, and students react positively to the opportunity and the mandate for revision. Increasingly, teachers are including a visit to The Write Place in the assignment. Whether required or for extra credit this reduces the need for the "R" grade.

Although the writing program at Stevens Point Area Senior High School was not designed specifically to reduce writing anxiety, research on the subject (Heaton, 1980) has made it possible to identify components of the program which do just that. Existing programs in any school probably make use of some of these techniques already. Use of the writing autobiography and WAT test can identify highly anxious students and help teachers decide what other methods they may need to incorporate into their program.

Too often researchers in English work in their own areas, ivory towers according to many classroom teachers, while teachers struggle with the problems of too many students and papers, and always too little time. Unfortunately, much research seems either irrelevant to teachers, or the results are presented as commandments from on high: "Thou shalt smite sentence fragments," "Thou shalt teach transformational grammar," or "Thou shalt teach paragraph development with one major and two minor supports." Neither encourages teachers to participate actively in designing research or applying its results. The relation between teachers and researchers ought to be a partnership, with each learning from the other and sharing what is learned. We need not wait, however, for the best of all possible worlds to exchange ideas, nor to take the next step of integrating research results and classroom practices. We believe the research and the writing program described provide evidence that this is possible even in an imperfect world.

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WRITING ANXIETY AND THE GIFTED STUDENT WRITER

DE GUTSCHOW
Whitefish Bay High Shhool

For the past three years I've had a teaching experience which might easily be called an English teacher's dream. While working under an ESEA Title IV-C grant in my school district, I taught only one course--the 9th grade English course for gifted student writers. In addition to this, I also was able to handpick the students enrolled in it. Although my work under the grant involved more than just the development and implementation of this writing course, I did have the time to work closely with the students and, this past year, to study how their anxiety levels with respect to writing were influenced by what they experienced.

The twenty students who were selected for the 9th grade program last year were identified through a process which included student applications, writing samples, teacher recommendations and achievement scores. After these students took the Henmon-Nelson Test of Mental Ability in Oct., 1980, I found that their IQ's ranged from 120 to 150, with 18 out of the 20 having IQ's higher than 130. (Thus these students, in addition to being talented writers, had a high level of general intellectual ability.)

Because the students had come from public and parochial schools in the Whitefish Bay community, I knew a good deal about the kinds of writing experiences they had had at the junior high level. These experiences, in general, were similar to those of most gifted student writers who are in conventional heterogeneously grouped language arts classes of 28 to 35 students.

First, instruction in writing tended to be limited to exposition--and more specifically to the expository paragraph developed from a topic sentence--and the basics of research paper form. Students did have the opportunity to write in other modes--particularly in connection with exercises in READ magazine--a Xerox publication specifically designed for junior high students--but such writing was rarely preceded by teacher instruction.

Second, teachers sometimes conferenced with students while they wrote in class, but because of the large number of students in the classes, teacher-student contact was very limited, and consequently teacher comments about student writing tended to be somewhat haphazard and cursory.

Third, the teachers' written comments on student papers tended to be limited to one or two positive remarks and to the noting of errors in mechanics.

Fourth, although students often were expected to correct the errors in mechanics, they were not asked to revise any content.

Fifth, while writing models were occasionally used, discussion of such models tended to be geared to the ability level of the average student writer.

Sixth, students were expected to learn the parts of speech and parts of the sentence, but they were not shown how they could improve the syntax of their own writing.

Thus, the 20 students entering my 9th grade class--while recognizably *superior in writing ability* to 90 per cent of their peers--were generally naive about the craft of writing. To them, a good paper was one that received the "A". A poor paper was one that didn't.

In September, 1980, I gave the students the Miller and Daly Writing Anxiety Test, and the results confirmed that the students had a generally positive attitude toward writing and toward themselves as writers. Daly and Miller had found that the mean score for average student writers at the college level is around 75. My students' scores ranged from a high of 75 to a low of 42, with the mean being 53.9.

Between September, 1980, and June 1981--when the 9th graders once again took the Writing Anxiety Test--they were exposed to a variety of instructional methods which were intended to have a demonstrable impact on their writing ability. These methods included the following:

(1) Emphasis on pre-writing activities. Such activities largely focused on the analysis of writing models--most of which had been written by students in grades 9-12, or by various English teachers who were skillful writers. These models illustrated both effective and ineffective ways of dealing with the writing assignments in the course and provided concrete examples of various skills and techniques a student needs to practice in order to become a good writer.

(2) Emphasis on sentence combining techniques. Through various sentence combining exercises, students were shown how to achieve that "tighter coiling of thought" which a number of researchers--including Walter Loban, Kellogg Hunt and Anne Gebard--maintain is the hallmark of skilled writing. In this connection, grammatical analysis was never an end in itself, but instead was a means of analyzing writing style.

(3) Students wrote in a variety of modes and received instruction in how to write in those modes--no minimum or maximum lengths were set in connection with the writing assignments.

(4) Students experienced intensive teacher critiquing of their work--both through written comments and one-on-one conferences. Peer critiquing was also encouraged. The aim of this critiquing was to assist students with the revision of their work, and students were allowed to revise their work more than one or two times if they wished, and if time allowed. Because of my flexible work schedule and light teaching load, I was often able to conference with students outside of class during their study hall periods. Consequently some conferences lasted as long as 45 or 50 minutes and included not only the discussion of student work but also of any problems the student was encountering--both academic and personal.

Through such conferences, the students and I grew to know each other in a way rarely possible under normal classroom conditions, and I gained much insight into their attitudes toward writing.

In June, 1981, the 9th graders again took the Miller Anxiety Test, and at first I was puzzled by the results. Although the two-point increase in the post-test mean score--an increase to 55.8--was not statistically significant, an analysis of the individual scores revealed some dramatic changes. First, while two students' pre- and post-test scores had remained the same, nine of the scores had risen anywhere from 6 to 32 points, and nine had dropped anywhere from 4 to 26 points. When I divided the post-test scores into two groups on the basis of whether they had increased or decreased, I found that both the increase and the decrease was statistically significant. The mean scores for the two groups are as follows:

Students whose scores increased:	Pre-test mean, 48
	Post-test mean, 64.3
Students whose scores decreased:	Pre-test mean, 61.5
	Post-test mean, 48.8

The mean pre- to post-test scores for the two groups had virtually been reversed. (The sex of the student did not correlate with the increases and decreases.)

When I analyzed the students' responses to individual items on the WAT, I found the dramatic appearance of these shifts in scores was tempered. First, students on the post-test showed a tendency to shift from the strongest possible responses--"strongly agree" or "strongly disagree"--to less strong ones--"agree," "disagree." Second, students also showed a tendency to shift from "agree or disagree" to "uncertain," again indicating they had become somewhat more tentative in their attitudes. The number of "uncertains," however, remained low on the Post-Writing Anxiety tests in comparison to other responses. Overall, the item analysis of the student responses suggests that what students experienced in the Whitefish Bay writing program tended to make them more conservative in their feelings about writing instead of actually causing major changes in their attitudes.

Because I have a number of things to say about both the students whose scores increased and those whose decreased, I'm now going to give the two groups distinguishing labels. Subsequently, the students whose scores increased will be referred to the "Uppers", while the students whose scores decreased will be called the "Downers."

First, I was fortunate enough to be able to have pre- and post-test writing samples in the narrative and expository modes scored by three outside evaluators, using holistic evaluation. The pre-test writing of the Uppers, in terms of the mean score, was somewhat lower in quality than that of the Downers, but the post-test mean scores were virtually identical, and both groups had made gains in scores that was significant at the .01 level.

Since the evaluated writing was produced in timed writing situations, I also looked at changes in fluency--or number of words produced. Here I found that while both Uppers and Downers showed an increase in fluency on post-test writing that was significant at the .01 level, the Uppers showed a much greater increase than the Downers. Thus, the Uppers, despite their increased level of anxiety--or perhaps because of it--wrote more and wrote better at the end of the year than they did at the beginning. The Downers, with their lowered anxiety levels, also displayed considerable improvement.

In order to gather student input on the changes in their anxiety levels, I asked them to discuss those changes in writing. All of the students, regardless of their WAT scores, stated that they had mixed feelings about the act of writing. The Downers tended to express a positive attitude toward having learned how to improve their writing and also toward having that writing realistically critiqued. On the other hand, they also tended to complain about the amount of time and effort it now took them to write well. The following student comment nicely sums up this view:

In 8th grade many of my themes were done the night before. I paid much more attention to the mechanics of writing and imagination than to actual *writing*. I've learned so much about writing this year that when I compare it to 8th grade, I feel as though my eyes have been opened--that last year I merely plowed blindly through my themes and reports. Now I feel as though I have something to go on, I know where I'm going when I sit down to write. And, although it's hard work, I've learned to appreciate revision and the improvement that comes with it.

The following comments by the mother of a girl whose anxiety score dropped 30 points reflect the positive impact the program had on a student who was highly anxious initially:

Meg, certainly, has been showing the impact of the Gifted Writing Program for freshmen. She has never worked harder or been more intellectually challenged. Her own standards for performance were expanded in the areas she enjoyed most. In teaching her to write with integrity, you also forced her to dig into her own feelings and observations more deeply than she had ever done before. She found herself articulating what she had stored away as inexpressible or undefinable. In writing poetry, she felt she had failed. But even here, we feel she had doors opened that will give her voice later . . . and she did like analyzing and critiquing poetry on the level of that class. Because Meg has always found it almost impossible to speak up in class, and painful in any circumstances to voice her feelings, she grew a great deal as she found and exercised with growing authority her own power of communication. She's always loved words. Now she was developing a healthy respect for the implications buried in each word. Needless to say, we are most happy that she was in the program.

At the same time the techniques used in the course reduced the anxiety level of the Downers, they had an opposite effect on the Uppers. Although the Uppers also expressed appreciation for what they had learned, they--unlike the Downers--tended to dwell nostalgically on the good ol' days in grade school when teacher response to their writing had been limited to praise and A's. This is how one Upper expressed her feelings:

My writing anxiety has gone up this year. Last year, all of my writings were praised and given good grades. My papers weren't intensively critiqued by the teacher and other students. This year, I was brought into reality. I found out that I wasn't the best writer in the world and that my writing needed work. At the same time I have learned a great deal about writing from being in the 9th grade class. The amount of time we've spent on writing has really given me an insight into not only my writing but that of others. In the past with a heterogeneous class, I received more praise, and less criticism, and I was more comfortable and confident. I guess ignorance is a blessing.

None of the Downers expressed regret about having lost their "innocence" with respect to what constitutes good writing. To them, ignorance was no "blessing." At the same time they expressed more concern than did the Uppers with meeting internal standards of excellence.

The Uppers, on the other hand, were quite concerned about external standards--particularly those of the teacher--as well as with other pressures from external sources. They talked of the pressure to keep up with the homework in 4 or 5 classes besides English, to meet the high

expectations of teachers, to juggle academics and extra-curriculars so that they would do well in both; to compete successfully with other students in the homogeneously grouped writing class; to find good ideas to write about that fit the requirements of the various writing assignments; and to prove to me, as teacher of the writing class, that they could successfully use the skills and techniques I had taught them. Obviously, the Uppers felt they couldn't find enough hours in the day to do what they would like to do, and do it well.

In conclusion, then, let me reiterate that both the Uppers and the Downers made considerable gains in their writing skill, regardless of what happened to their anxiety level. Greater consciousness of the writing process had both its pluses and minuses for them, but it obviously contributed to, rather than detracted from, their ability to write well.

At this point one might ask whether the writing quality of gifted students would show a statistically significant increase in a heterogeneous class, of 28-30 students, in which the more conventional approaches to writing--like the ones I described earlier--are used instead of the approaches I used. One might also wonder what would happen to the writing anxiety of such students.

I can make a tentative attempt to answer both questions because I used a control group of gifted student writers drawn from heterogeneous language arts classes in another suburban school district where the 9th graders experienced the conventional approaches to writing and grammar. Because I was working with a very small sample of 16 students as controls, the findings are hardly conclusive, but they are interesting. First there was no statistically significant difference in the mean scores of the pre- and post-test writing samples. And the scores on the post-test samples were significantly lower than the scores the Whitefish Bay papers received. Secondly, while some scores on the Post-Writing Anxiety Test increased and some decreased, the changes were much less dramatic for the comparison group than they were for my students. The post-test mean of 57.4 was about a 3-point drop from the pre-test mean but non-significant.

Unfortunately, most English teachers, because of typical class sizes and teaching loads, find it impossible to use the instructional methods which these students said had helped them the most--that is, intensive critiquing through one-on-one conferences *and* written comments on papers, and frequent opportunities to write and revise.

When I returned to teaching 5 classes and 135 students, I found that I could neither provide the kind of help the freshman needed, nor let them do the amount of writing and re-writing which had so benefitted my other gifted writers. And, lamentably, the financial problems of my school district--like those of other school districts--make it likely that teaching conditions will deteriorate rather than improve in the future.

In light of all this--and in light of what I now know about how gifted student writers can be helped to realize their potential--my own anxiety level and frustration level, have skyrocketed. Because of my work I have come to realize the extent to which the gifted student writer is a neglected minority in our English classrooms, and having realized this, I, too, agree that ignorance is a blessing.

16

ARE BASIC WRITERS AFRAID TO WRITE?

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Basic writers have been variously described as error-prone, hampered by lack of skills, egocentric and non-analytical in their approach to a subject, and apprehensive or fearful about the task of writing. These are observations made by basic writing teachers as a result of their experiences in working with basic, remedial, writers and their written products. These students are, without any doubt, error-prone; a look at their papers confirms it. Mina Shaughnessy suggests an occurrence of ten to thirty errors in 300 words,[1] and Andrea Lunsford one in every eight.[2] This lack of skills in turn hampers writing, leading to constricted, poorly developed essays. Furthermore, egocentricity and an inability to analyze and synthesize a given subject places additional limits on the ability to address that subject with maturity and insight, notes Jerome Bruner and Lunsford.[3]

Basic writers are indeed error-prone and hampered by lack of skills, by egocentricity, and by a non-analytical mode of reasoning. Yet I have doubts that these unskilled writers are any more fearful about writing than their counterparts in the regular composition classes. In fact, my experience leads me to think they are not.

Shaughnessy perhaps most significantly describes the basic writer as apprehensive about writing. In her bibliographic essay in Gary Tate's *Teaching Composition,* she concurs with Patricia Cross's reference to the basic writer's "non-academic interests, pragmatic educational goals (credentials and vocational preparation), and fear of failure," amending, however, the *expectancy* of failure in academic situations."[4] In an oft-quoted passage in her major work, *Errors and Expectations,* Shaughnessy describes the basic writing student as extremely error-prone, hence fearful of writing and, thus inhibited, inadequate in developing a topic:

He is aware that he leaves a trail of errors behind him when he writes. He can usually think of little else while he is writing. But he doesn't know what to do about it. Writing puts him on a line, and he doesn't want to be there. For every 300 words he writes, he is likely to use from ten to thirty forms that the academic reader regards as serious errors. Some writers, inhibited by their fear of error, produce but a few lines an hour or keep trying to begin, crossing out one try after another until the sentence is hopelessly tangled.[5]

Shaughnessy's observations are sustained by Lunsford in an instructive article on the use of Aristotle's rhetoric in basic writing classes. Lunsford suggests that "the fear of failure and the distrust of academia and of teachers . . . may contribute to the small number of words basic writers produce."[6]

John A. Daly, addressing the subject with statistics, has reported correlations between writing apprehension and quality of writing. Using a measuring instrument devised by him and Michael D. Miller to assess an inhibiting anxiety about writing,[7] Daly has noted the relationship: "High apprehensives not only write differently and with lower quality than low apprehensives, but, in addition, fail to demonstrate as strong a working knowledge of writing skills as low apprehensives."[8] He has found repeatedly that the writing of high apprehensives is significantly lower in quality than that of low apprehensives.[9]

Yet Daly's findings, even though rather conclusive, must be viewed with some care. By "high apprehensives" he is not referring to students in basic writing classes but rather to those in a given sample who score above the mean by, usually, a standard deviation. The writing of these students is generally of poorer quality than that of the "low apprehensives" those scoring to an equal degree below the mean on the writing apprehension measure. However, while Daly shows that the high apprehensives are poorer writers, can we also say that the poorer writers are highly apprehensive? In another study, in which Daly did assess the writing apprehension of basic, remedial, writers compared to that of regular students, he reported no significant differences between the two groups. His means were 74.67 (on a scale of 26 to 130) for the remedial students and 76.33 for the regular students.[10]

These findings coincide with those I discovered in a limited study comparing a remedial class with a regular class. My means were 72.78, remedial, and 74.42, regular.[11] In both this study and that conducted by Daly, the basic writers showed a tendency, though not significant statistically, to appear even less apprehensive than the regular writers. These findings indicated a need for further research into the attitudes of basic writers toward writing.

Are basic writers fearful, apprehensive, about writing? I investigated this question again in a larger, better-controlled study, in which I used four sections of a college remedial writing course.[12] Students had been advised to take the course on the basis of entrance examinations that included writing, and they were assigned to a given class by computerized registration procedures. Two teachers taught two sections each. At the beginning of the semester and at the end all students wrote an in-class impromptu essay on an assigned topic and completed the Daly-Miller apprehension measure. Once all the papers were in, the essays were rated holistically by three trained readers (whose reliability coefficient exceeded .84), and the apprehension tests were scored. Complete data was collected for 49 students.

One thing that became apparent from the results was that basic writers cannot without qualification be termed apprehensive about writing. For the subjects of this study, the grand mean on the writing apprehension measure was 74.76 at the beginning of the semester and 72.55 at the end. These figures compare to Daly's mean of 75.59 for a sample of 3,602 college undergraduates enrolled in a freshman composition course.[13] The subjects of my study thus were slightly less apprehensive than those of Daly's mean, implying that these basic writers were not anxious about writing.

Another question that had to be answered concerned the relationship between attitude toward writing and quality of writing. It seems that remedial writers are no more apprehensive about writing than freshman composition writers; however, is there within the remedial group alone any correlation between writing quality and attitude? I found none. The correlation coefficient between the preliminary essay rating and the preliminary apprehension score was .090, hardly any relationship at all, and on the final measures the coefficient was only .152. Quality of remedial writing, therefore, cannot be determined by attitude toward writing.

Multiple regression analysis indicates that what does reliably predict quality of writing by remedial students is, not unexpectedly, quality of writing. That is, the quality of a student's writing at the end of a semester is dependent largely on the quality of the writing at the beginning of the semester. I derived a correlation coefficient for the pre and

post essays of .593. Writing attitude, on the other hand, serves only to predict writing attitude, as shown by the correlation figure on the pre and post apprehension scores, a highly significant .710.

A semester of writing practice, in other words, has no statistically significant effect on how a basic writing student feels about writing. Moreover, and perhaps more important, the absence of correlation between writing quality and writing attitude raises essential questions about the effects of attitude. Are the individuals with an apprehension toward writing the poor writers and the less apprehensive individuals the better writers? Perhaps so. Daly's research does indicate a significant relationship. Yet my findings do not support the converse: that poor writers are apprehensive about writing.

The explanation for why individuals who write so poorly are not significantly anxious about sitting down with pen and paper may simply be that, for the most part, they just don't care. They neither hate nor like to write, as a score in the 70's on the Daly-Miller measure might indicate. Then again, perhaps my students were not of the same caliber as those Shaughnessy described. Lunsford mentions what may be another explanation for this lack of writing apprehension in basic writers:

> In one sense their inexperience and lack of resources do make them "indifferent to peril" in their writing. I am referring to the Basic Writers who, sticking to primer sentences and bland cliches, achieve a false sense of competency, a feeling that what they have written will be safely "correct" and hence acceptable.[14]

She suggests that students must be alerted to the perils of their writing but at the same time be relieved of unnecessary fears.

It's really no fun to write, said Max J. Herzberg,[15] but my evidence seems to say that it's not very upsetting either. Therefore, I must conclude that fear of writing is not an outstanding characteristic of basic writers, nor does their attitude toward writing have any significant influence on the quality of their writing. Basic writers are error-prone, fettered by their lack of skills, and egocentric and non-analytical in their approach to a subject. But evidence seems to indicate that they are not afraid to write.

NOTES

[1]Nina P. Shaughnessy, *Errors and Expectations* (New York: Oxford, 1977), p. 6.

[2]Andrea A. Lunsford, "What We Know--and Don't Know--About Remedial Writing," *College Composition and Communication,* 29 (1975), 50.

[3]Jerome S. Bruner, *The Relevance of Education* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1971), p. 143; Andrea A. Lunsford, "Aristotelian Rhetoric: Let's Get Back to the Classics," *Journal of Basic Writing,* 2 (Fall/Winter 1978), 3,4.

[4]Nina P. Shaughnessy, "Basic Writing," in *Teaching Composition: Ten Bibliographic Essays,* ed. Gary Tate (Fort Worth: Texas Christian Univ., 1976), pp. 137-67.

[5]*Errors and Expectations,* p. 7.

[6]"Aristotelian Rhetoric," p. 5.

[7]John A. Daly and Michael D. Miller, "The Empirical Development of an Instrument to Measure Writing Apprehension," *Research in the Teaching of English,* 9 (1975), 242-49.

[8]John A. Daly, "Writing Apprehension and Writing Competency," *Journal of Educational Research,* 72 (Sept.-Oct. 1978), 11.

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ENCOURAGING JUNIOR HIGH WRITERS

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It was Aristotle, I believe, who wrote that the teacher ought to know well the subject he/she teaches. This is a statement that, when I was far younger than I am now, I thought so obvious as to be ridiculous. At my present middle-age, however, it appears to be sound advice that is too often disregarded--A teacher should know well what he/she attempts to teach.

When do people write?

I know that students write term papers; educators write talks and articles; authors write books; Nobel Prize winners write abstruse scientific papers, and journalists write for a living. But, I mean ordinary people--all the rest of us--when do we write? When I was preparing this talk, I made a list of the examples of common, every day writing that came into my mind.

People write lists: lists of things to do, lists of things to buy at the grocery store, lists of things to pack for a vacation
People write notes: notes "from the desk of . . .," notes to themselves, notes that send a student to the office or to the nurse
People write when they fill out forms. Usually, though, forms only require one or two words in answer to an uninteresting question.
People write directions: how to find a street or a house, how to build a bookcase, how to bake a carrot bread

Probably, there are more. All of these examples on my list are short, personal, and usually non-sentence types of writing. Often they defy basic mechanics but, in most cases, they are still understandable to the person who deciphers them.

I know that there are special occasions on which an ordinary person may write a more extended piece. For instance, the secretary of an organization may write the minutes of meetings. Some jobs require people to write reports for on-the-job situations. There must be somebody out there who keeps a diary or, perhaps, writes periodic entries into a journal. Some people, I think, still write letters. But many Americans, as we know, will use the phone whenever possible.

I am making these observations because, before we talk about encouraging/teaching writing, we should come face to face with the fact that an intelligent American can live a functional and even reasonably successful business life without ever writing anything except short disjointed pieces. Many Americans, once they have left school, will never write an extended piece during the balance of their lives.

It is true that skill in using the written English language is often admired and sometimes even envied; but, in every walk of life, it is not a necessity. We should not try to deceive children. We should not tell our students stories about how "you won't be able to get a job without the ability to write a paragraph on 'My Favorite Food.'" Whether these young people will one day get and hold a job, or whether they will not get and

hold a job will depend far more on other factors than on their ability to write paragraphs. Writing is not always a marketable skill, nor is it necessarily essential to entering and staying ahead in today's job market. If it were, we English teachers would be displayed out in front in this market place and not relegated to the storeroom as many of our number are.

What is writing?

When we present writing to students, we should present it for what it is. Writing is not the ability to form marks upon a page--however neatly those marks may be formed or however correctly they may be ordered. Nor is writing the ability to use commas and question marks in accordance with the rules. Too often, the teaching of writing is reduced to the teaching of spelling, capitalization, and mechanics. Now, a word of caution. I am not against teaching spelling. capitalization, and punctuation. But I am very perturbed about writing programs that stress so called "basics" and never move beyond the technicalities. A student can learn to spell, to punctuate, and to capitalize and still not be able to write. In fact, I will be so bold as to say that teaching mechanics will not improve writing. But teaching/encouraging writing will do a lot to improve a student's spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.

One large difficulty is that our student writers are given no need, or desire, to communicate their written ideas to anyone--except, of course, the teacher. Teachers, however, are not good readers because teachers will try to understand anything. Real readers don't. Real life readers put down a piece of writing when it is too carelessly written to be easily understood. When it is necessary for a student to present his written ideas to other students, then suddenly technicalities become important--not to the writer, but to the reader who wants to understand the ideas scratched upon a written page. For this reason, our writing program always includes a final step of Presentation.

Writing is not an act. Writing is a process. It is a process that we use to formulate and communicate ideas. The interesting thing about the process of writing is that we can communicate these ideas to people who are not present to hear us. And the other person can put our ideas aside to peruse these ideas at his/her leisure in an atmosphere of quiet contemplation. Writing requires no noise in its communication. It needs only the common, simple instruments of pen and paper. Written ideas are easy to save or transport. In fact, we can use writing--and educated people often do use writing--to communicate with themselves. For this reason, writing is useful not only in the communication but more important in the formulation of ideas. Through the means of writing, we can begin an idea, put it away unfinished, bring it out again, and progress with it from there.

The process of writing is far too intricate, too intellectual, and too wonderful to be a necessity. Writing is a luxury. It is a luxury of an educated mind. People do not need to write, but the ability to write will enrich their lives. A uniquely human act, writing deals in the formulation and transmission of ideas. Ideas are the result of thinking. Therefore, writing can and will enhance our uniquely human ability to think. Thinking is what the whole writing process is about. Writing is a means to thinking. The question is not can one get a job or can one not get a job, but rather how can we human beings enrich our lives. How can we push our lives to higher and higher levels of human activity.

When we present writing to our students, we should keep in mind that real writing has two forms of use in an enriched human life--an every day enriched human life, that is. Educated people use writing as a means to

learning and as a source of enjoyment. Yes, I said *enjoyment*. Writing is an enjoyable activity. Many keep diaries or journals of our thoughts. We tell ourselves we are sharpening our skills, but really we are writing because we want to write. How many of us attempt occasionally to write poetry or descriptive pieces or even stories. Why? Because we enjoy the mental exercise and the sense of intellectual achievement that a well written piece brings to us. Sound preposterous? Certainly not.

We all know people who have become addicted to various kinds of physical exercise, not only because they feel motivated to improve their physical well-being or their bodily appearance, but because they have learned to enjoy the very activity of the exercise itself. Well, if people can learn to enjoy physical exercise, why can we not educate people to reap enjoyment from intellectual exercise--namely, writing.

Besides being a source of mental exercise, the writing process is probably the best means that I know for learning. Many of us write not because we know the material we are writing but because we want to learn it. I can think of no method as effective as writing for marshalling my thoughts toward clarity. Writing forces my mind to order its thinking because I can look back over what I have written, and I can see the gaps. If I am inclined to deceive myself into believing that the gaps are not very wide or that they only exist in my imagination because, of course, my mind will fill them in as I move along, then the words inked upon the page will show up my deception; and those words will embarrass me into precision.

Precision in thinking--isn't that really what education is all about? Isn't clarity of thought the hallmark of an educated person? When we teach/encourage writing, I think, we should keep in mind that we are instructing a student in patterns of thinking. We are teaching a means to the acquisition and understanding of knowledge. We are training a student in the use of one of the two essential tools of education: writing and reading.

I am not talking about survival writing--the writing we hear people say is necessary "to get a job." Get a job, indeed. How about an education? Why can't a person learn to be a human being. Each one of the students we teach will be a human being for far more hours in his/her day and far more years in a life than he/she will work at any job. Jobs, of course, are important--they are a means to survival in our economy; but the ability to think, to learn will outlast any job. It may even hold the human being together through periods of joblessness, illness, and sorrow.

Encouraging Writers: A Model

When I teach a process of writing, I do not make a distinction between creative and expository writing. The very process of writing itself demands creativity. I believe that there is an element of creativity in expository writing, and there is an element of exposition in creative writing.

Here is a model that I use for teaching the process of writing to my students with an explanation of each step and some examples of how each step can be implemented within the English classroom. I use this approach for all types of writing, but I never ask my students to do *gimmicky* writing. I realize that sometimes unusual ideas do call forth creative efforts on the part of students, but I think creativity should be used to accomplish something. The writing in my classes is always purposeful. Our writing must lead somewhere. I have found that even seventh graders can write intelligently about serious topics if they have been adequately prepared for this writing.

Step one: MOTIVATION

The purpose of this step is to peak the student's interest in the subject and to help him/her find a topic. The motivation lesson may include a film, filmstrip, or tape. It may be the reading of a selected piece of literature or a news item. If the motivation lesson evolves into a discussion, it should be a teacher-led discussion whose purpose is to inform the students about the subject on which they will write.

Step two: PREPARATION

The purpose of this step is to set the collective class mind to work on the topic. The preparation lesson may involve a class centered discussion, or it may be a class activity, maybe even a class game. If the motivation lesson centered on a reading, then the preparation lesson may analyze that reading. How does the author say what he says? What do we think about this subject, or this approach to the subject. Did the author use interesting images in his/her writing? How did the author structure his/her piece? Sometimes the preparation lesson is a word game where students list and organize words having to do with the chosen subject. The preparation lesson is conducted either with the class as a whole or in small groups, but it is always done together.

Step three: PRE-WRITING

The purpose of the pre-writing step is to allow the student to organize on paper, his/her thoughts about the topic. The pre-writing lesson is always a paper and pencil activity. It is accomplished by each student working individually with the topic. This is never a group activity. Pre-writing is done in the classroom so that the teacher may observe each student as he/she struggles with thoughts about the topic.

The pre-writing lesson may be a simple listing of statements that come to mind when the student thinks about the topic. These statements are written down without regard to time or causal relationships. Once the statements are written, the student may be asked to clip them apart and to arrange these statements into an organized pattern.

The pre-writing activity may involve answering questions about the topic. Questions, however, are of value only if they follow a structure that begins with the literal level of comprehension, advances through convergent to divergent thinking, and only then reaches a level of evaluative thinking. Questions that follow a gradual progression through the levels of comprehension form an excellent guide to thinking. Random questioning, on the other hand, most often becomes an exercise in futility.

At this point students have advanced through the first three steps of the model; they have consumed, perhaps, two or three days of class time; and yet, they have not written a composition. The time spent on these first steps is essential to the composing process. In many classrooms this preparatory work is condensed or altogether eliminated because it is considered "wasted" time. If instruction in the writing process means instruction in a thinking process, then the time spent in these preparatory steps is time devoted to teaching skills of thinking. Who can say that teaching thinking skills is "wasted" effort in an educational endeavor?

Step four: WRITING

The purpose of this step is to require the student to write a rough draft of the composition. This rough or first draft is written in the

student's assignment notebook. The student is required to keep this rough draft in his/her notebook as he would keep any other assignment. This rough draft will become a working copy of the student's composition when he/she begins the task of revising.

Step five: REVISING

The purpose of this step is to give the student an opportunity to test his/her power of communication on another person. If we think about the word *revise* for a minute, we will see that it means to take a second look at something. For the novice writer, the second look is best done by a person other than the writer. The young writer usually does not have the ability to critique and, thus, make necessary changes. The new writer reads what s/he intended to write, not what s/he has actually written. A second reader, therefore, helps the young writer to see the work as it stands. It is only after this objective second look that real revising can begin.

Who are these other readers? Anyone who is willing to read, consider, and critique is a good choice. Second readers may be moms, dads, grandpas, grandmas, friends, business people and other public readers. It is a good idea to discourage students from using the teacher as a second reader because many new writers become too dependent on the teacher's observations. If young writers are to develop their own writing style, they must be encouraged to work independently.

Step six: REWRITING

The purpose of this step is to allow the student to make a fine copy of his/her writing, a copy that is presentable to a reader. This is the step for technicalities. It is at this point, that the student must check capital letters, punctuation marks, and spelling. This good copy is written in ink and on white paper.

Step seven: PRESENTING

The purpose of this step is to enable the student writer to share his/her finished work with an audience. The presenting of written work may be handled in a variety of ways depending on the skill and maturity of the class. In the beginning, presenting may simply be a session in which the teacher reads compositions to the class without mentioning names. Gradually, as the students become more familiar with the arts of speaking and listening, this step may involve a formal class session in which each student takes his/her turn at the lecturn. Inviting guests into the classroom will add a sense of excitement and importance to the student presentations.

Regardless of how the presenting is accomplished, the result must be that the students realize writing is not a private venture. Writing is a form of communication. If ideas are not communicated to someone, an audience, then the purpose of the writing is lost. In South Milwaukee, we have found that this presenting step has practical value. The quality of our students' written work projects improved when we demanded presentation as a requirement for the grade.

I hope a few of you, my audience, will try to use and adapt our model to your specific classroom need. Naturally, we will be interested to learn about your successes and/or problems in teaching the process of writing by means of our model.

MAKING A WRITING CLASS A COMMUNITY

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Among the major impediments to learning in a writing class are student anxiety, passivity, alienation, and sometimes even hostility. The negative attitudes students often bring with them the first day of class have in many cases been shaped by past experience in English classrooms. Perhaps they've been frustrated trying to learn complex and seemingly arbitrary rules governing a language they already consider their own. Perhaps they've been angered or hurt when papers in which they've struggled to express their ideas and feelings have come back covered with red-penciled comments that seem like insults. Or perhaps it's been something else. But they're rarely in the best frame of mind for the very personal and very difficult activity writing almost invariably is.

Creating a sense of community, an atmosphere of trust and relaxation in a writing class is valuable even for happy and successful students; for sullen and defeated students it is absolutely essential. Teaching methods and activities aimed at this may seem at first like a waste of valuable time--there's so much, after all, we feel they need to learn--but we mustn't forget that students learn better when integrated not alienated, active not passive, eager not hostile.

It's important to keep these goals in mind from the start. Learn all their names right away if possible. Chart each student's seat location as you take attendance, memorize names as they write their diagnostic essays or perform other first day tasks, and review your notes a few times before the next class. Hand out file cards or forms early on asking students to list their jobs, hobbies, interests, favorite magazines or TV shows, and so on. Follow this up, if possible, with a brief conference with each student --early enough in the term so that it won't seem punitive--in which you simply chat. This will make them individuals in your mind and you a real person in theirs, and will make it easier for them to come to you with writing or other problems in the future.

Relations among students are no less important than relations between student and teacher. Ask students to take two minutes to introduce themselves, or better yet, have them interview each other in pairs and then present their partners. Play a "name game," perhaps, which forces everyone to learn everyone else's name. Finally, with their permissions, pass out a list of the name, address, and phone number of every class member. This will not only help friendships develop and build a sense of community, but will place the responsibility for keeping up with the work where it belongs. Explain that anyone absent must call someone else, find out and make up what was missed, and complete any assignment due upon return.

A thorough discussion in class of feelings about writing can be very valuable. Arrange the chairs in a circle or semi-circle, and ask the class what their past writing experiences have been like, how they feel when given a writing assignment, why they don't like writing (if they don't), how they go about avoiding it, whether they believe learning to write well is really important, and so on. Be sure everyone talks. You'll learn a lot about what motivates and frightens them and, more important, they'll realize they are not alone in their difficulties with writing. The sense that will emerge of a shared problem--even their teacher, they may learn, finds

writing fraught with anxiety--will not only build a sense of community but make their fears and difficulties easier to deal with.

Writing can be a very isolating activity, even more so if no one, except a teacher looking for errors, reads what has been written. So it is important that students share what they write with their classmates. Once a sense of trust has been established, and once they have overcome their initial shyness, students will welcome the chance to read their papers aloud to the class and have them discussed. Hearing the reactions of other students to their work will give them a sense of a real audience, an audience of their peers, an audience they consider worth writing for, and will help them learn to narrow the gap between what they think they're saying and what others read in their words. And discussions that take their *ideas and feelings* seriously will help them learn that there's more to writing than just avoiding errors. At least at the start, be sure to choose topics --my worst job, my worst teacher (be careful!), what makes me really angry, my most dangerous, most embarrassing, or happiest moment--that students will succeed with, that will interest both writers and audience. Every effort should be made to make writing a positive experience.

Even better than class discussion is small group discussion of student writing, especially if it's part of the revision process. There's no place to hide in a group of three or four, and a well-structured group discussion (with periodic visits by the teacher) can make even the most passive student an active participant. Be sure--at least the first time or two--to give detailed instructions, preferably written, on what to do in these groups. Suggest questions, including many open-ended ones, that tie in with recent lessons and that elicit praise as well as constructive criticism. Designate the student to the right of the author as group leader for that paper, responsible for keeping the discussion on topic, moving it along, and making sure that everyone says something. Once students know and trust each other well enough to make both negative and positive comments about each others' writing, they come to enjoy and benefit from small group work. By learning how to improve the writing of others through revision, they slowly but surely learn to improve their own.[1]

Work in small groups is valuable not only for revision, but for anything from pre-writing to paragraph structure and even grammar exercises. Group work of almost any kind helps build the sense of community and habit of cooperation it depends on. Students might, for example, work in groups to develop writing topics--perhaps from journals they've been keeping--and also theses and outlines based on those topics. Group work can prove an especially effective part of the process of writing argument papers, for discussion of controversial issues in groups can help students learn to anticipate and answer potential arguments against their own point of view as an integral part of their writing. This discussion may also bring a certain urgency to their writing, by making them eager to convince the disagreeing others in their groups. By bringing students out of the hiding so common in larger class lessons and discussions, and by bringing them into a more relaxed and more immediately stimulating situation, group work help keep students actively engaged with the work at hand.

Grading, usually unavoidable, is one thing that can easily damage the sense of community in a writing class, for it is essentially individual and, worse, competitive. At best, one can hope to minimize its impact. Certainly, it's worth postponing putting grades on papers as long as possible. Students usually have learned to equate writing with being tested, to see

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[1] On group revision, see for example, Peter Elbow, *Writing Without Teachers* (New York: Oxford 1973); Harvey S. Wiener, *The Writing Room: A Resource Book for Teachers of English* (New York: Oxford, 1981; and Stephen N. Judy and Susan J. Judy, *An Introduction to the Teaching of Writing* (New York: John Wiley, 1981).

it primarily as an effort to avoid punishment for mistakes, and a series of papers with encouraging comments but no grade can help build a necessary confidence and even a desire to write well for its own sake. Also, making each writing assignment a series of steps--free writing, organizing, drafting, rewriting, editing, whatever--only the last of which receives a grade --can lesses the inhibiting and anxiety-producing impact of grading. Finally, though, aside from pushing for pass/fail grading (especially in remedial courses), the best you can do about grading is to remain sensitive to its possible effects.

The necessity of grading reminds us, of course, that our writing classrooms do not exist in isolation, that they are part of a larger institution, a larger world, and that students come to writing class from and leave it for other classes and other experiences that may work very strongly *against* our attempts to build a sense of community. But it's worth the try nonetheless. For if we can make the writing class a place students *want* to come to, a place where their thinking and their writing are taken seriously and shared with fellow students as well as a teacher, in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect, then perhaps they'll learn not only to write better but to enjoy and benefit more from their other classes as well.

Writing Anxiety: Reasons and Reduction Techniques
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Are Basic Writers Afraid to Write?
Continued from page 16

[9]John A. Daly, "Writing Apprehension in the Classroom: Teacher Expectancies of the Apprehensive Writer," *Research in the Teaching of English,* 13 (1979), 38.

[10]John A. Daly, "Further Studies in Writing Apprehension," *Research in the Teaching of English,* 9 (1975), 254.

[11]Donna Gorrell, "Writing Apprehension: (1) Combating Fear of Failure," *Illinois English Bulletin,* 67 (1980), 9-16.

[12]Donna Gorrell, "Controlled Composition for Teaching Basic Writing to College Freshmen," D.A. Dissertation, Illinois State Univ., Normal, 1980.

[13]"Writing Apprehension and Writing Competency," p. 11.

[14]"Aristotelian Rhetoric," p. 6.

[15]Max J. Herzberg, "It's No Fun to Write," *English Journal,* 41 (1952), 127-31.

READERS' PERCEPTIONS OF ADVANCED COLLEGE WRITING AND ADULT COLLEGE GRADUATE WRITING

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Introduction

Since the mid 1970's, we have witnessed growing concern about the quality of the writing of high school and college students. But while it is certainly important that we be aware of how well our students are writing by our lights, it is equally important that we be aware of the standards by which their writing is judged outside schools. We should not simply be concerned with academic standards, but also with the standards set by educated non-academicians who are the audience who read most of our students' writing. It is both practically and theoretically important to identify the relation between both groups' perceptions of the quality of writing.

This study was designed to begin to deal with these issues. In the first part of the paper, we present judgments of writing by University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee seniors in relation to writing by college graduates working in the Milwaukee area business community. In the second part of the paper, we compare how UWM English teachers and educated non-academic readers perceive writing "errors."

During the spring of 1980, we gathered term papers written by seniors attending classes in the following schools or departments on the UWM campus: Engineering, Architecture, History, Business, Nursing, and Education. All of the papers had been written outside of class and turned in toward the end of the semester, so they were the best source of the students' best efforts. During the same period, we also acquired a wide variety of memoranda and reports written by adult college graduates in the Milwaukee business community. Since this writing was edited, we felt that it, like the senior writing, represented the best writing its authors were capable of.

We excerpted twelve paragraphs from the samples of senior writing and twelve paragraphs from the samples of adult college graduate writing. In our professional opinion, these paragraphs were fair to good in quality and comprehensible out of context. Since much of the writing was technical, we also included two control paragraphs of a less specialized nature so that the people participating in the study would not automatically assume that they could guess the origin of the group of samples. Responses to these two paragraphs were not considered in the results.

Twelve people were asked to read and judge the excerpts. Six were trained raters of the English Proficiency Essay Examination in the English Department at UWM, experienced at holistic reading. The other six were non-academic, educated professionals in engineering, publishing, advertising, and library science in the Milwaukee, Madison, and Chicago areas. All of the non-academic readers had at least a bachelor's degree. Unlike the academic readers, however, none study or teach composition and discourse theory. All of the readers received booklets containing one unidentified excerpt on each page, and were instructed to (1) rate each excerpt from poor to excellent; (2) mark errors; (3) edit the samples; and (4) decide whether the excerpts were written by a beginning college writer, an intermediate student, an advanced college student, or an adult college graduate.

Results (Part I)

Table 1 shows how both groups rated the overall quality of the excerpts. We assigned numerical values of 1-4 to the four holistic categories we used (poor - 1; fair - 2; good - 3; and excellent - 4). Thus, as table 1 indicates, the academic readers thought that the excerpts were of fair to poor quality, wheras the non-academic readers thought that the excerpts were of fair to good quality.

Table 1 Holistic Scores (Means)

Sample origin	Academic Readers	Non-academic readers
Senior writing	1.93	2.34
Adult college graduate writing		

It appears that neither group distinguished the quality of the senior writing from the quality of the adult college graduate writing, though if the results are compared across groups, the academic readers seem to have rated both groups of excerpts lower than the non-academic readers did.

Table 2 and 3 show how the two groups of readers assigned authorship to each group of excerpts. The figures marked "total" indicate the total number of excerpts marked by all of the readers in each group. When a reader was unsure who had written an excerpt, and marked more than one category (intermediate and advanced college student, for instance), we assigned a value of .5 in each category.

Table 2[1] Academic Readers

	Beginning	Intermediate	Adv. C.S.	Adult C.G.	Total
Senior Writing					
responses per category	7	27.5	12.5	25	72
% of responses per category	9%	38%	18%	35%	100%
Adult College Graduate Writing					
responses per category	6	9	7.5	48.5	71
% of responses per category	8%	13%	11%	68%	100%

Table 3* Non-Academic Readers

	Beginning	Intermediate	Adv. C.S.	Adult C.G.	Total
Senior Writing					
responses per category	10	29	20	13	72
% of responses per category	14%	40%	28%	18%	100%
Adult College Graduate Writing					
responses per category	6	18	13.5	32.5	70
% of responses per category	9%	26%	19%	46%	100%

Ideally, all of the senior excerpts should have been identified as the writing of advanced college students, and all of the adult college graduate writing as that of adult college graduates. However, when the

[1]All readers read 12 senior and 12 adult college graduate excerpts. With six readers in each group, we ended up with a total of 72 opinions per group. The totals are sometimes fewer than 72 because some readers failed to mark a few excerpts.

results for both groups are combined, it turns out that only 23% of the senior excerpts and 57% of the adult college graduate excerpts were correctly identified.

The readers in both groups did not consistently agree about who they thought were the authors of the individual excerpts. Only 10% of the excerpts read by the academic readers and 14% of those read by the non-academic readers were assigned to only one category of authorship. In most cases, the two groups assigned each excerpt to two, sometimes even three, different levels.

The two groups of readers appear to have varied considerably in their opinions of what they saw as the characteristics of the four levels of writing. The non-academic readers tended to correlate the quality of writing with the educational level of the writer. They identified the excerpts that they marked fair or poor in quality as the writing of beginning or intermediate writers. Those they marked as good or excellent, they assigned to advanced college students or adult college graduates. The academic readers, on the other hand, saw no such correlation. They reacted more to features of the writing itself. For instance, if an excerpt was technical or contained jargon or obscure language, the academic readers tended to label it as adult college graduate writing, probably because, as instructors of English, they view these features as characteristic of writing done outside of the university. The academic readers also thought that much of the adult college writing was of fair to poor quality, a judgment that directly contradicts the views of the non-academic readers.

Conclusions (Part 1)

The results suggest two generalizations. First, that academic and non-academic readers do not agree on what they perceive to be good writing. It appears that academic standards are somewhat higher than non-academic standards, though a more comprehensive study would have to be conducted before any probable predictions could be made. Second, and perhaps more important, the two groups of readers have markedly different opinions of what they see as the characteristics of beginning, intermediate, advanced college student, and adult college graduate writing. The non-academic readers feel that as one's educational level increases, so does one's ability to write, whereas the academic readers see no such correlation.

Results--Error Identification and Editing (Part 2)

In addition to rating and ranking the excerpts, both groups were asked to mark errors and edit the excerpts. Even though none of the non-academic readers labeled any errors, their editing clearly showed the errors they found.

The excerpts used in this study contained what we will term "actual" errors and "perceived" errors. Actual errors are errors that all educated people would recognize and acknowledge. For example, the comma preceding the verb *have* in the following sentence is an actual error; current rules of usage prohibit placing a comma between a relatively short subject and its verb:

> In the past ten years, local branches of the federal government, have begun regulating the amount of noise an operator must endure.

Actual errors are arhetorical; that is, they are not related to the content or the purpose of the writing in which they are found, and educated readers generally agree that such locutions are errors, whether they notice them or not when they read.

Perceived errors, on the other hand, are rhetorical errors whose perception varies from reader to reader. Different people will perceive different strategies for improving a piece of writing or may not think it needs change at all. For instance, if a passage is thought excessively wordy, a variety of changes might be suggested: one might rewrite the piece, shortening it but retaining the meaning expressed in the original; or one might simply elimate parts of the original piece altogether, especially if these parts are thought to contain extraneous information.

The excerpts used in this study contained thirty actual errors (see table 4). Punctuation mistakes were the most frequent errors of this type present in the excerpts. Also present were verb tense shifts (shifts from the past tense, for instance, to the present tense: In early silent movies, comedy *was* common, but violence *is* very uncommon); inaccurate word choices (words whose meanings do not accurately reflect the meanings intended, for example *derived* in the following sentence: After they met, a new relationship derived); faulty parallelism (a series of items that are not of the same grammatical form, for instance *smoking* and *to overeat* in the following sentence: Smoking and to overeat are unhealthy); and omissions (a word or a group of words which are left out but which are necessary to complete a sentence; in the following example, *based on* needs to be inserted after *to be* in order for the sentence to make any sense: The cost is difficult to calculate because it is to be a percentage of sales). Even though actual errors are easy to characterize, research has shown that they very often go unnoticed.[2]

Table 4 Actual Errors

Types of Errors	# of errors present* in excerpts	Non-Academic Readers	Academic Readers	Total
Punctuation	172	36	32	68
Inaccurate word choice	12	4	4	8
Subject-verb disagreement	12	1	1	2
Apostrophe	12	4	6	10
Idiom	12	3	1	4
Pronoun reference	12	0	1	1
Faulty parallelism	24	3	5	8
Verb tense shifts	48	11	13	24
Verb form	12	3	4	7
Omission	12	2	1	3
Plural noun needed	12	1	3	4
Total	340	68	71	139

*The figures in this column were arrived at by multiplying the number of errors times twelve, the total number of excerpts in which the errors occurred. Thus, for instance, if all twelve readers had marked all of the punctuation errors that existed in the excerpts, they would have marked a total of 172 errors.

This claim is corroborated by our findings: the non-academic readers and academic readers marked only 38% and 39% of these erros, respectively.

We divided perceived errors into three groups: errors in mechanics, diction, and organization (see table 5). Both groups of readers marked errors in mechanics and diction quite frequently. However, organizational errors, errors concerning the structure of the excerpts, were marked less frequently, especially by the non-academic readers.

[2]Joseph Williams, "The Phenomenology of Error," *College Composition and Communication*, 32 (May, 1981), 152-168.

Table 5 Perceived Errors

Diction Errors	# of errors marked	
	Non-Academic Readers	Academic Readers
Jargon/Obscure language	25	28
Unclear constructions	43	22
Wordiness	37	27
Personal preference	37	30
Informal word choice	7	14
Redundancy	4	9
Unnecessary nominalization	3	3
Tone	1	8
Overly abstract word or phrase	0	5
Sexist language	1	3
Cliche	0	1
Subtotal	158	150
Mechanical Errors		
Punctuation		
-mark needed	30	31
-superfluous mark	12	5
-different mark needed	8	6
Unnecessary passive verb	10	13
Two or more sentences need to be combined	17	9
Change excessively long sentence into two sentences	9	0
Awkward sentence	2	3
Broad pronoun reference	5	22
Faulty subordination	0	5
Subtotal	93	94
Organizational Errors		
No clear controlling idea	2	5
Lack of adequate transitions	6	20
Unity	7	22
Faulty logic	4	5
Inadequate Development	0	4
Lack of coherence	0	2
Subtotal	19	58
Total # of errors marked	270	

Errors in diction elicited the most responses from both groups. In particular, the readers objected quite frequently to words that they thought were not clearly used. For instance, one reader thought that the writer of the following sentence ought to specify whether he or she was writing about the state or federal Department of Transportation.

> These laws, identified as Hazardous Materials Regulations, titled 49 CFR Parts 171-177, become effective January 1, 1977, and will be administered and enforced by the Department of Transportation.

Jargon was also commonly marked, especially in the adult excerpts, which many of the academic readers thought were sometimes purposely obscure. Both groups, not only the academic readers, objected to jargon. Finally, both groups made some changes only attributable to personal preferences, an and marked redundancies, informal diction, and unnecessary nominalizations (verbs turned into nouns; for example: *explain* and *explanation*).

Both groups perceived a number of mechanical errors, most frequently mentioning that the excerpts needed additional punctuation. The non-academic readers thought that some of the sentences in the senior excerpts needed to be combined and that some of the sentences in the adult excerpts were too long and needed to be split into two sentences. This is an interesting finding in light of the current composition pedagogies (e.g., sentence combining) based on the premise that college students sometimes write too many short sentences. Similarly, adult college graduates frequently are defined as writing overly long and complex sentences. Unlike the non-academic readers, the academic readers marked quite a few errors in broad pronoun reference; that is, pronouns that refer back to a group of words or perhaps even an entire sentence, not to a specific noun.

The non-academic readers made very few comments about the organization of the excerpts. The few comments they did make wre mainly directed at the senior excerpts, which they and the academic readers thought in some instances contained more than one controlling idea (lacked unity) and were missing key transitional words and phrases (e.g. *however, on the other hand,* etc.). In addition, the academic readers felt that many of the excerpts were inadequately developed and needed a stated controlling idea.

It is not surprising that the non-academic readers made so few comments about the organization of the excerpts. Commenting on the organization of a piece of writing requires an extensive knowledge of the langauge of the writing procession, a vocabulary that the academic readers are more likely to possess.[3]

Conclusions (Part 2)

Although both groups of readers marked an equal number of actual errors, the academic readers marked 11% more perceived errors than the non-academic readers did. Also, the academic readers frequently commented on the contents of the excerpts, something the non-academic readers did not do at all. These findings are consistent with those cited in the previous sections, and indicate further that the academic readers were more critical of the excerpts than the non-academic readers were.

Implications

Throughout this study we have hesitated to make strong claims because our results are based on the comments of two small groups. Nonetheless, what we have found suggests questions whose more copiously documented answers would better inform writing instruction. It seems clear from what we have discovered so far that educated readers, whether within or outside academe, share a sense of the relative quality of writing based on their perception of "actual" error. At the same time, however, academic and non-academic readers differ insofar as they focus on different types of error.

An expanded version of this study would, if it described larger samples of writing read by larger academic and non-academic groups, be capable of producing statistically significant indications of what sorts of errors writers in both settings should alertly edit their own prose for. It could also better inform writing teachers about the diversity of the audiences students must learn to write for. And it might also lead to identifying universal characteristics of reader responses to prose whose quality is in question.

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[3]Content and organization seem to be important criteria for academic readers. For more on this, see: Sarah Freedman, "Why Do Teachers Give the Grades They Do?" *College Composition and Communication,* 30 (May, 1979), 161-164.

Continued on page 32

BOOKS

FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

Hamilton, Virginia. *Justice and Her Brothers, Dustland, and The Gathering.* New York: Avon, 1981. *JHS.*

Sweltering summer days, bicycle riding, a race, exploring the banks of the Quinella Trace River are all part of an interesting but rather ordinary summer in the life of *Justice and Her Brothers.* But no. This summer was different. ". . . she'd the notion that something deadly strange was going on." Amid this "ordinary kid" background, Justice resists but gradually comes to accept the gift and responsibility of her special powers: sentience, telepathy, telekinesis, and clairvoyance. Each of her thirteen year-old twin brothers and a friend also have several of these powers. However, hers is the strongest and when combined with theirs, a powerful unit is formed which can withstand the forces of Malvolence. They discover their power allows them to project into the future. But to what purpose?

In *Dustland*, the four pass through the Crossover into the future to a land devoid of vegetation. A barren land laden with dust, the result of overconsumption of natural resources and the forces of nuclear power. The land's habitants are mutants of earth creatures living a marginal existence, trying to survive the forces of Malvolence. But why are they there? What is their purpose? How does Dustland operate? As they struggle to answer these questions, Thomas, her oldest brother, fights to gain dominant power over Justice. He breaks away from the unit, taking his twin brother Levi's unconscious mind, leaving the illusion of his body with Justice. Thus Thomas creates another problem. They cannot return home except as a unit.

The children travel to Dustland a second time in *The Gathering* to fulfill their purpose. They assist Dustland residents in escaping the ocean of rolling dust. Coming to a seemingly perfect domed city, Sona, they find it has an imperfection which can only be solved if Justice donates her power to the Colossus, the controller of Sona. When they return home to the Quinella Trace, Justice learns it is not over - a power, maybe not the same, but a power will gradually fill up in her again. The ending leaves the way open for a fourth book in the Justice cycle.

The Justice cycle, a story of vitality and energy, allows the reader to walk beside the characters as alive, fresh language is melded with the story and theme. The presence of the writer's power is invisible but permeates every page. Hamilton creates a background for the story which reflects and foreshadows its growing intensity. You can feel the sweat begin to drip down your back from the descriptions of the intense heat, feel the gritty dust grinding into your skin, sense the forces of good and evil mingling among the osage hedgerow. Written primarily from Justice's viewpoint, the story leads us to puzzle through events with Justice. She doesn't know the direction of the story, nor do we so we discover it together. Hamilton takes us to the end of each book questioning all along the way. Many questions are resolved but some are left unanswered . . . leaving us wondering "What will happen next? Why? How"? Mary Jett-Simpson, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

M. B. Goffstein. *Lives of the Artists.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1982. Upper elementary and junior high.

Picture book artist Goffstein has created a poetic celebration of five artists: Rembrandt, Guardi, Van Gogh, Bonnard, and Nevelson. In a brief text of about fifty lines per artist, Goffstein has managed to evolve a feeling about each artist's work, convey something about the artist and, perhaps most important, create an invitation to the reader to enter the artist's perception of the world by viewing the artist's work. Although perhaps the text seems overstated at times

("Artists . . . crave the work of other minds to feed their hungry eyes"), or, on the face of it, too simple or unimportant at other times ("Louise Nevelson wears beautiful clothes . . ."), the text on the whole is imaginative, evocative, and filled with surprising detail that creates humor or makes an idea specific or alive. Only two illustrations, one in color and one in black and white, illustrate the work of each artist. There is, therefore, only a taste of the work of the artist, similar to the textual taste of understanding the artist's work and life.

Careful reading of the book with a group of children may lead to thinking about ways to capture a feeling or life style by simple detail in word or picture, to new ideas about art and its function, and to the impact of poetry on understanding. The book may also be an invitation to children to view other works of art by these five artists. Bette J. Peltola, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

FOR TEACHERS

Macrorie, Ken. *Searching Writing*. Rochelle Park, N.J.: Hayden Book Co., Inc., 1980.

Anyone familiar with Macrorie's *Writing to be Read* or *Telling Writing* will recognize the basic principles and procedures expressed in *Searching Writing*. It, however, focuses on the writing of papers called "I-search" papers by Macrorie.

"Writing Every Day" capsules the basic principles -- the use of free writing, the trap of *Engfish*, the telling of truth and the cutting of wasted words. Each is well illustrated with examples and exercises that express the ideas directly.

The core of the book, "I-Searching," details the application of these to research reporting, the key being the nature of the research proposed. Denigrating the standard *secondary* research topic, he promotes *primary* research, the students searching out the answers to questions that "count for them," questions that are immediate and pertinent. He identifies procedures and criteria; he explains and illustrates research and writing techniques -- "a topic choosing you," locating sources, using narrative and dialog, interviewing. The student writing "models" are engaging.

The book concludes with an editing section, but not what you'd expect. "Bad Words" swings through the four-letter variety to land hard on weasel words. The chapters on punctuation and spelling, instead of giving mere rules and examples, provide concrete examples of common concerns; he offers both clear explanations of current practice and historical insights.

I recommend *Searching Writing* both for its conceptual approach and its techniques. Macrorie's writing is lively and expressive. Altogether it is a fine complement to the personal writing focus of his earlier works.
Nicholas J. Karolides, University of Wisconsin-River Falls

Readers Perceptions . . .
Continued from page 30

College seniors should, we think, be able to write successfully for non-academic audiences. Academics who teach writing should be aware that non-academic audiences are neither so strict nor so lax as they are sometimes thought to be. If we are to provide literate interaction among academic and non-academic spheres, further investigation along the lines we have begun to draw is obviously called for.

SERVICE BULLETIN No. 29 - Index: *Wisconsin English Journal*/Volumes 1-15. Compiled by Eugene Engeldinger and Barbara Stevens, UW-Eau Claire. $2.00 - member/member libraries; $3.00 - non-members.

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